Depot Town Rag

August 1995

100% FREE Rag Content

- Carshow
- *Ypsilogos*
- 18th Home Tour
- **Stained Glass tour**
- *Historical Hoopla!*
- Cross Street's origin

and other strictly local stuff. . . .

Volume 18, Number 8 *"All the news in one block in one month."*

A Publication of the DEPOT TOWN ASSOCIATION, INC. P.O. Box 970-235, Ypsilanti, Michigan 48197-0804

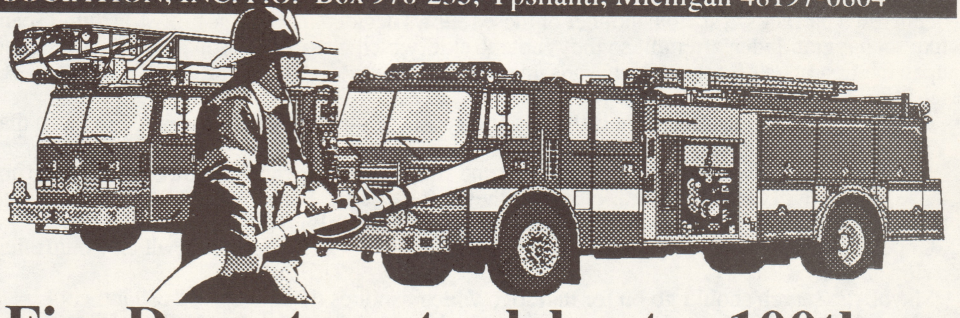
First micro-brew finds maxi-acceptance

"It's outselling everything we have on tap by three to one!" boasts Jeff Haller, sales representative for Frog Island Brewing Company, David French's newest promotion emanating from the Sidetrack Grill in Depot Town. Emblazoned a bit smaller than Depot Town's favorite playground on the new beer label is "Stewart's Ale" referring to *Ypsilanti Press* reporter, Will Stewart, who complained loudly about the recent send-up of a 'wheat ale' which didn't please his taste buds nearly as much as the new 'Frog' potion introduced here this summer.

The label's dapper frog in a red velvet smoking jacket and spats is the work of Depot Town artist, Carl Fischer. "It's the hops!" is the motto below this satisfied-looking, cigar-smoking reptile.

Brewed for Dave French in Frankenmuth and distributed by Silverfoam Distribution Company, the new ale is proving to be the most popular choice in the area this season.

The first micro brewery product to be seen in the area, Frog Island's product has spread through the district to Aubree's Saloon, Cady's Grill, and beyond to downtown's Taproom, the Radisson Resort, Ann Arbor's Ashley's and Bombay Bicycle Club, Dewey's in Pinckney, Kelly's in the Irish Hills, and the Dexter Pub in Dexter. "Today Depot Town; tomorrow the world!" could easily be another motto to add to the attractive label for this popular and tasty new English-style ale.



Fire Department celebrates 100th

The Ypsilanti City Fire Department celebrates a cenntenial of service to our community in 1995 - and that history is shared with the town's historic railroad district, as well.

Back when the City of Ypsilanti had finally agreed on dropping Woodruff's Grove and Sweetwater as the name for an on-the-rise, up-and-coming New Town in the former Michigan Wilderness, the folks were still able to to find something to argue about. They were highly contentious and vocal about the placement of the railroad track reaching out from Fort Detroit and they were stewing about which side of the Huron River would be favored with the United States Post Office.

In 1852 the uppity East Siders actually seceded from the City of Ypsilanti and called themselves East Ypsilanti. They formed their own fire department and called it the Neptune Fire Co. Real Ypsi had a department, too, but there is no record of the two organizations having anything very friendly to do with each other. There were no Fireman's Balls or Picnics or any friendly rivalry. Visiting firemen, in those days, usually meant a fist fight at the Cross Street or Michigan Avenue bridges -- sometimes both.

All that changed when the City eventually came back together and the newly formed Common Council created a paid fire department in January of 1895. They soon established two engine houses, one at 21 S. Huron Street in the parking lot behind today's City Hall/Bank/Cheese Grater; the East Side engine house was in Neptune's former quarters, in what is now Paul Klawitter's glass studio in the Thompson Block at 400 North River Street. Each department worked seven-day shifts, with a day off at the end.

In 1898 Council brought the two together and moved them into what is now Tom Conway's Auto & Truck Museum at the corner of West Cross and North Washington Streets. This had been a popular block for such amelioration, since the New City Hall & Jail was now in the brick building at the west end of the Cross Street Bridge. [This modest structure was later used as the 'Pest House', where people with contagious diseases could take up residence to see if they would survive it or not. Friends brought food to the window sill and Catholic kids crossed *themselves* and Protestant kids crossed *the street* on the way to and from school.] When City Hall took up residence in Old Dan Quirk's Big House With The Tower across the street, the former offices became a Dead-or-Alive Chicken Store and today is John Pappas' sculpture studio.

City Architect E.P. Rorison drew up the first plan for a new consolidated Fire Hall and Henry Carew and Co. of Detroit hired on as the builder. The West Cross property cost the City $1,600 and the cost of the magnificent new structure was $7,150. It opened for service in August of 1898. East Siders still didn't like the fact that it was to be erected on *West* Cross, but there was no way they could build their fancy, new fire hall in the middle of an intersection. They had to learn to live with it.

The New Fire Hall was a much more imposing building than any other public edifice in town. It was created in the popular Victorian Romanesque Style and the tower used for drying out hoses rose like an Italian Campanille (without bells, but it had pigeons!) at 110 West Cross. When a call came in, firefighters slid down shiny brass poles from their second floor bunks and dining rooms and roared out into the City, turning left to the East Side, right to the West.

By 1926, seven-man firefighter shifts worked a three-platoon system and, by the 1970s, yet another central station was built - this time on Michigan Avenue, right next to the New City Police Station & Jail. Most of the new construction at this time didn't look like the old Thompson Block or an Italian palace. The new stuff looked a lot like Kleenex boxes and [continued overleaf]

"Let us suprise you!"
"The City that works"
"Where business and education meet."
"Be proud of Ypsilanti. I am."

An Ypsi logo? What this town needs is...

- by John Delcamp

'MONACO COOL!' How do you get it? Certainly not in Ypsilanti. You'd have to go to Monaco.

But in Ypsilanti there is plenty of 'cool' to be found in the nooks and crannies of this truly interesting place.

Recent thoughts of some of Ypsilanti's enterprising citizens have focused on a theme or logo which might encompass and embrace the feelings one gets when walking the well-trodden paths of our city.

Browsing the historical records available at our local libraries, I came across a wonderful and perhaps slightly controversial 'city theme' which might fill the ticket nicely.

This theme is based on the exploits of an assemblage of men from the Ypsilanti area who joined a Civil War regiment known as the 27th Michigan Infantry. It seems that while bivouacked at the depot town barracks, a sizable number of these fellows decided that maybe army life didn't seem like such a grand idea after all, so they 'up and skit' which makes you wonder why they signed up in the first place. So this action leads up to the new logo, "YPSILANTI: A NICE PLACE TO DESERT!"

As you may have guessed, there is the possibility that this could be misinterpreted to mean that Ypsilanti was a nice place to leave.

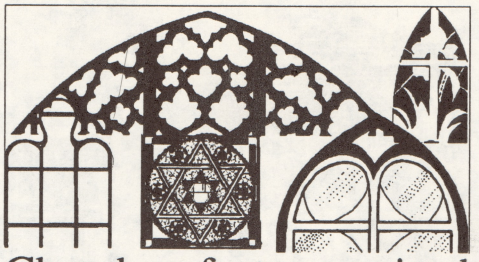
Once again we consult the historic records and find that there is no mention of whether or not these men actually left Ypsilanti, only that they left the army. Perhaps the new logo should be amended to read, "YPSILANTI: A NICE PLACE TO DESERT TO!"

Or perhaps it should say, "YPSILANTI: A NICE PLACE FOR DESSERT!" which would elicit a stop at "Terry Bakery.

Maybe the search should go on for that logo which captures the allure of 'Ypsilanti cool.'

After a recent trip to quaint little towns nestled in the eastern reaches of West Virginia and Maryland we remembered where narrow streets are lined with neatly kept clapboard houses, blossoming hillsides and misty blue backdrops of distant ridges enrich the scenery. These were villages with names like Middletown, Winchester, and Shepardstown, where storefront industries turn out blue and grey Civil War kepi hats and reproduction hoop dresses. Then my wife and I returned home to a post-vacation dinner out in Depot Town.

As we walked down the hill past expansive yards and turned onto River Street and strolled past the old crumbling EMU-colored 19th century Thompson Block which housed those men who marched off the Civil War (and some who didn't), and rounding the corner of the reconstructed signal tower (without clapboards), we stepped into the warm glow of the quaint little shops which are part of our town. My wife looked at me and smiled as she said, "YPSILANTI: AS NICE AS ANY PLACE!"



Churches feature stained glass tour at Heritage Fest

Nine church properities will show their version of "Images of Ypsilanti" through colorful and historic stained glass windows Saturday, 19 August, from 1 to 5 P.M. There is no admission charge for the tour which will include the following properties:

- Brown Chapel (AME) (1843), 401 S. Adams Street (2 and 4 P.M. van shuttle service from Historical Museum.)
- Emmanuel Lutheran Church (ELCA) (1859), 201 N. River Street
- First Church of Christ, Scientist (1914), 123 N. Adams Street
- First Congregational United Chruch of Christ (1881), 218 North Adams Street
- First Presbyterian Church (1829), 300 N. Washington Street
- First United Methodist Chruch (1825), 209 Washtenaw Avenue
- St. John The Baptist Roman Catholic Church (1858), 410 W. Cross Street (closes at 4:30 P.M.)
- St. Luke's Episcopal Church (1830), 120 N. Huron Street
- Starkweather Chapel (Highland Cemetary) (1890), 493 N. River Street

For more information, call 483-4253 or 483-8789.

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"Gifts, projects or build your own collection"
At Ypsilanti Farmers' Market
Wed. and Sat. 8-2
• Ride for Bob, Gail Kornbluth •

Fire Dept's 100th [cont from page 1]

motels, schools, and shopping centers seemed stamped from the same not-too-complicated mold. It was also a period when Modernistic Mavens seemed embarrassed about their old-fashioned addresses and began to cover them with more Kleenex designs or cheese-grater-style grids.

Today, many residents say that Ypsilanti seems like a Real City, with separate and distinct sections of personality and style. Whether today's call to a fire is on the East Side, West Side, South Side, or Northwest Passage To The Athens Of The Midwest, three seven-person platoons of firefighters are ready to respond. It's a tradition of service that's gone on for one hundred years.

Favorite vehicles: Depot Town Kids love to watch the trains, no matter how old. Everybody seems to love old cars: Hudsons, Dodges, Corvettes, or Jeepsters, but nobody can ignore a fire engine. The whole third grade will erupt when the engines fly by with their sirens blaring, and most older aficianados fully expect to see them painted Fire Engine Red today.

The newest Fire Hall is efficient and modern, but there are no horses, Dalmations, or red fire trucks there. Jim Roberts, Chief of the Ypsilanti Fire Department these last nine years and a 28-year veteran of the department, says Ypsilanti is justly proud of its yellow fire trucks. "When a yellow truck pulls up, you know it's the City of Ypsilanti," he notes. Red trucks are harder to see at night, Roberts points out. "It's hard to believe, but even with all those lights flashing, people still run into a red truck at night." A new yellow truck for the YFD is being bid out in late summer and delivery is expected in six or eight months.

Today's heroes: Those same school kids can give a modern update on people and values, too. Sure, some of them fawn over those hostile Mighty Morphin Power Rangers, and others are in love with a Purple Barney but, when it comes to a true reality check, the kids in every neighborhood know that the Real Heroes in their town are the firefighters who risk their lives daily to keep others safe.

Those are the kind of crews who've served Neptune, East Ypsilanti, Cross Street and Downtown. That's the kind of place this is. Our annual Heritage celebration is about buildings on one level, but the really vital history is about the people who lived and worked in them. That's what the Heritage Festival is really all about and Ypsilanti's firefighters are the focus of this year's celebration. The entire community joins in wishing a Happy Centennial, YFD!

Join the celebration: Seventeen departments and a complement of historical fire engines from Greenfield Village will converge upon Ypsilanti's Riverside Park on Saturday, October 17 to celebrate Ypsilanti's Fire Department Centennial. "National Fire Prevention Week commemorates the Great Chicago Fire," notes Chief Roberts, "and this year's will celebrate the Ypsilanti Department's 100th year!"

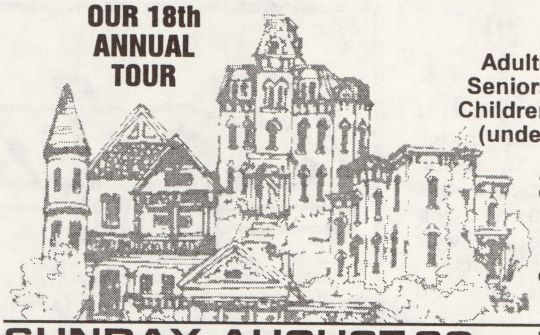
Dateline: Depot Town

A Neighborhood Forgotten by Time (and Life and Newsweek)

Ypsilanti Heritage Foundation

Historic **HOME TOUR**

OUR 18th ANNUAL TOUR



	Advance Sales	After Aug. 17*
Adults . . .	$7.00	$8.00
Seniors . . .	$6.00	$7.00
Children . . . (under 12)	$5.00	$6.00

*Available at Heritage Festival

Advance Ticket Locations

- **IN YPSILANTI**
  - YPSILANTI HISTORICAL MUSEUM
  - MATERIALS UNLIMITED
  - NORTON DURANT FLORISTS AND GIFTS
- **IN DEPOT TOWN**
  - REMINGTON-WALKER DESIGN ASSOCIATES

SUNDAY AUGUST 20 & NOON - 5PM

Historic Home Tour goes east, west, outside City

The Ypsilanti Heritage Foundation's Home Tour is even older than the Heritage Festival and this marks their 18th year in which they feature six 19th and early 20th century homes on Sunday, August 20, from noon to 5 P.M., the final day of the 1995 Ypsilanti Heritage Fest.

Four of the homes on this year's tour are from Ypsilanti's Historic East side, a neighborhood particularly rich in 19th century architecture. The East Side has undergone a renaissance in recent years, as more and more of its beautiful Victorian homes are restored and returned to single family use.

On the West Side, the Foundation will feature one of the twelve early 20th century "Post Victorian" houses located on Linden Court, part of the Woods Road/Pleasant Drive/Linden Court neighborhood. A closely knit neighborhood, it will hold its 52nd Annual Neighborhood Picnic this September.

And, for the first time in the tour's history, the Foundation presents a home located outside the City of Ypsilanti. Though now located in Superior Township, Springhill Farm has historic ties to the City. The oldest house on tour, this magnificent 162-year-old "dollar house" stands as a tribute to the commitment of its last two sets of owners to the cause of historic preservation. Condemned in 1966, it was purchased for one dollar and moved from East Michigan Avenue to its present location. It is widely considered to be one of the outstanding examples of Greek Revival architecture in the Midwest.

The Historic Home Tour is the Foundations' major fund-raiser and proceeds from the tour support an annual scholarship program, the Historic Structure Marker Program, and educational programs on preservation-related topics, which are held throughout the year and are open to the public. In addition, a portion of the proceeds from this year's tour will be donated to the Ypsilanti School District to help in the development of an educational program designed to enhance student awareness of and appreciation for historic architecture.

Advance, discount tickets for the tour may be purchased at the Ypsilanti Historical museum, Materials Unlimited, Norton Durant Flowers & Gift Shops, and at Remington-Walker Design Associates in Depot Town. Advance tickets are $7 for adults, $6 for seniors, and $4 for children under twelve.

After August 17th, tickets are full price and are only available during the Ypsilanti Heritage Festival, at tickets booths in Riverside Park and in front of the Ypsilanti Historical Museum, located at 220 N. Huron Street at $8 for adults, $7 for seniors, and $5 for children under twelve.

For information call 482-8666.

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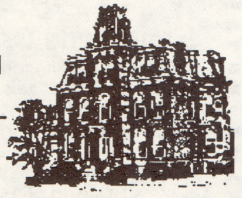

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New meeting schedule for Depot Town Assoc.

Summer changes things down at the depot and June's regular monthly DTA meeting saw July and August meetings moved to what is hoped to be a more convenient schedule for all neighborhood activists.

- **July's meeting** will be at 6:00 P.M., Thursday, 27 July, at Renewed Interest Antiques.
- **August's meeting** will be at 6:00 P.M., Thursday, 10 August, also at Renewed Interest Antiques.

With the August 18, 19, 20 Heritage Festival plans upon us, it is hoped these meeting times will afford all interested parties the opportunity to make adequate preparation for the event. All are welcome to join the activity of the Depot Town Association and help to promote the district during this huge annual event held on our old business block.

July 27's and August 10's DTA minutes will be published in the September issue of *The Rag* and distributed on Sunday, August 20, the final day of Heritage Festival.

Register now for September programs at EMU's Depot Town Center

- **Food for Thought - Contemporary Issues Series**
  - Sept. 19 — Right-Wing Extremism on the Rise
  - Sept. 26 — The Bell Curve: A Critical Look
- **Seminars, Workshops and Short Courses**
  - Sept. 11 — Organic Gardening and Beyond
  - Sept 13, 20, 27 — Wills, Trusts and Estate Planning
  - Sept. 14 — Dreams and Their Meaning
  - Sept. 21 & 28 — Autumn Gardening
  - Sept. 26 — Sleep Disorders in the Elderly
  - Sept. 18 — Cultural Samplers Series - The Polish Heritage: Customs, Costumes, and Dance
  - Sept. 25 — Cultural Sampler Series - Polish Culture: An Exploration of Traditions
- **Book Talk**
  - Sept. 19 — Book Talk Session One - *The Celestine Prophecy*
- **EMU Dinner Theater**
  - AYU's Final Show: We're Not Leaving!
  - Sept. 15, 16, 17, 22, 23, 24, 29 & 30

Call EMU's Depot Town Center
for more information at 313-487-6810
or EMU's Continuing Education at 313-487-0407.

Classic and classy autos to show here

They're getting them off the streets ... and into the parks on the third weekend in September. Many of those gorgeous classical and historic automobiles seen parked curbside in DepotTown will be the stars of the First Annual Riverside Park Car Show and they'll draw many more along with them.

Local car collectors can sit around Jack Miller's Hudson dealership only so long and eventually they start plotting another auto extravagnza for the district. Jack mused about a national *slicker* for so long, then went on to edit the *White Triangle News*, a clearing house magazine for Hudson, Essex, and Terraplane collectors and restorers.

Dave Blackmer from Miller's Ice Cream (no relation to the Hudson garage) pampers his '50s Jeepster and sometimes parks it out front where Loren Hansen can see it from across the street at Standard Printing and get the message to bring his restored Hudson into town the next day.

Then Ypsi Fire Chief, Jim Roberts, might stop by and just dare them all to get their cars together and bring their friends' cars, too. That's the initial part of the plan for the September show in Riverside Park.

That's how these events get going down here and what looks like a 'first annual' promotion is bound to create collectors' items in the not-to-distant future.

The first-time event will draw a wide variety of vehicles: classic, antique, street rods, custom cars, and more ... for a truly unique Ypsilanti experience not to be missed.

1st Annual
Riverside Park Car Show

Sunday, 17 September 1995
10 A.M. to 4 P.M.

Trophies • Door Prizes • Dash Plaques

Advance Registration $3.00
Contact Jim Roberts
525 W. Michigan Ave, Ypsilanti, MI 48197

Next month's *Rag* will feature historic vehicles from this historic neighborhood.

THE DEPOT TOWN RAG

A publication of the Depot Town Association, Inc. a nonprofit, tax-exempt corporation dedicated to preserving the unique character of the neighborhood and to the enhancement of its business climate. -Tom Dodd, editor

The Depot Town Association, Inc.
Tom Steele, president
P.O. Box 970-235
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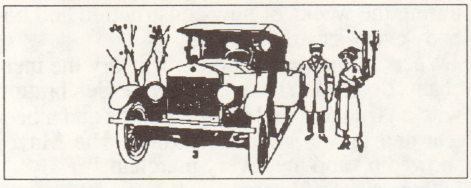
Responding to call for "Images of the Past" Heritage theme, these historic moments have been captured by our readers

Mosquitos cause settlers to run aground.



Miller Motors has new models on display.

Street name search becomes a *Cross-word* puzzle dating back back to Woodruff's Grove

Countless college students have been casting about the district for the origin of the name for *Cross* Street. "Was it because it was easy to *cross* the river here?" they postulate. Perhaps Harvey C. Colburn's references to *Cross* in 1923 in celebration of the City's Centennial Celebration will help in some 1995 EMU term papers. So many of the original settlers' names appear on today's street and road signs that it is safe to assume the *Cross* family would number among them: Grant, Woodward, Tuttle, Snow, and *Cross* all show up on many signs around here. Researchers may well wonder why there's so little mention of the Stiles, Ryan and Hall families who accompanied them, as well.

Early settlers at the Grove

In Colburn's chapter on the original settlers in 1823, he tells how Daniel *Cross* joined Benjamin Woodruff's neighbors in Woodruff's Grove when he was among the second group of settlers to arrive by flat-bottom boat at the new community on the Huron River.

In May of 1824, Jason *Cross* and his brother-in-law, Avery, arrived to make what Colbrun called "strong addtions to the life of the community."

First militia founded

Colburn's next mention of *Cross* included Alvin and William Cross, still living in Woodruff's Grove:

"It was thus to be expected, the population of the community having become sufficient to sustain a militia organization, that a demand for military protection should arise. On April 15, 1826, a meeting of citizens was held at Woodruff's Grove, where the matter was discussed and a suitable request addressed to the military authorities of the Territory.

"The result of this meeting was the community's first militia organization, which came into being through General Orders dated at Detroit, May 10, 1826. The territory from which this company was to be drawn included that portion of the County east of a point established between Ann Arbor and Woodruff's Grove. The first officers of the company, appointed under general orders issued by the Adjutant General, were Andrew McKinstry, Captain; Jonathan Kirk, Lieutenant; and Alvin *Cross*, Ensign. William *Cross* was commissioned Captain of the Ypsilanti Company by Governor St. Clair in 1828..."

First addition to the village

William *Cross* surfaced later in a municipal business deal with Depot Towner, Mark Norris, who had a mill on today's Frog Island and lived in the white Greek Revival house just north of today's depot:

"The growth of the town during the Thirties occasioned several additions to the original plat. The first of these was made by Norris and *Cross* in 1834, and consisted of two pieces of ground, the first, on the East Side, inclosed (sic) by the river, Forest Avenue, River and *Cross* Streets; the second on the West Side consisting, except for a small portion, of the ground inclosed (sic) by Forest Avenue, Huron, Ellis and Hamilton Streets..."

Their first addition included what is today's depot district. Erroneously thought by many to be the "oldest part of town," many of downtown's buildings predate these.

So much for the *Cross* family of founding fathers. Shall we assume William named the top edge of the new village plat addition for his own family? Could be!

Before the bridge

Colburn's next reference is to the street, itself, and tells us something of the actual nature of the *crossing* to the depot:

"The topography of the village during the years 1840 to 1849 presents some interesting contrasts to that of today. Fine streets, level lots and uniformly dry surface were yet in the future. The area about Gilbert Park was a knoll, between which and the site of the Lutheran Church, the surface was seldom dry. Each spring before the ground thawed, water stood here deeply. *Cross Street terminated at the river*, there being no permanent bridge across the stream at that point. Each spring, to facilitate visitation between the East and West Sides, planks were laid over the morass between the banks and the water, and a rude foot-bridge constructed to span the stream. This was regularly carried away by the floods of winter..."

Honoring Historical Heritage Hoopla

It was the Seventies and America was experiencing The Energy Crisis. Even in exotically-spelled Ypsilanti there were long lines at the gas pumps and K-Mart had turned off every other overhead flourescent light. Down in Depot Town they had just received a Community Development Block Grant through the City government to replace their streets and sidewalks and a bunch of the local folks who sit on park benches hid all the busted parking meters during the weeks of new construction and nobody every saw them again.

When all the new concrete was dry the merchants decided to have a Sidewalk Celebration with a jazz band and artists' booths and a beer tent and it was good. Hizzoner The Mayor showed up and met every merchant in their place of business. It was the most television repair shops that George Goodman had ever seen all in one day. For the merchants, it was the first time many of them had seen each other. A DPW worker said, "You guys ought to join the City permanently. What is this place called? It feels like Downtown Superior Township, or something."

The Doctor's Wife and the College Boy said, "You ought to do this kind of neighborhood party every summer." They formed a committee to try to convince people who were tired of the cows at the Michigan State Fair to come to Ypsilanti. Nearly every town in America put up its own festival that year and tried to convince people not to drive to California to see The Only Walt Disney. Keep the gas in the tank and stay close to home. Ypsilanti figured it would celebrate its own heritage, since the Bavarian Alps and Stratford-on-Avon were already taken by other towns.

"If everybody in Ypsi came, that would be a big crowd, in itself," said one of the Founding Mothers. "Think how big this could be if we had everybody in Ypsi on The Festival Committee." And then they started talking to those groups who were always selling something at the bank exit or in the neighborhood parks, trying to convince them to all do their hustle at the same time in the same park. It was hard to imagine fried chicken, pancakes, and spaghetti all sold in the same place that weekend, but think of the money they'd save on tent rental.

In the years since that First Fest, some things have stayed the same. The Official Attendance Estimate seems stuck on 300,000 (*more* than the State Fair!), and the tie dye shirts are always lovely, but most of today's Fair Food comes in stainless steel mobil units and the Big Name Acts are gone. The Amazing (Flying?) Wallendas haven't returned and the Franzen Brothers' Circus has not bothered the neighborhood dogs and cats in a few years. A replica of the Viet Nam Veteran's Memorial was erected on Frog Island a few years ago, and they're still walking around in loincloths at the Living History Encampment.

There have always been Problems To Solve in putting on an extravaganza of such enormity. One year the railroad crossing was closed for construction all summer; another year saw the Cross Street Bridge demolished and replaced. Each negative was turned into a positive and the activity was made the focus of the event. *ArTrain* shows up in Ypsi more than in any other town in America (seven visits, so far) and their staffers brag to the rest of the world how "*ArTrain* saved Ypsilanti's Skid Row." Still others say that, from our promotional successes of two decades, we could at least change our name to Skid Drive. It's all in the eye of the beholder, right?

"Hold that plane - -and don't let the Wallenda's off!"
"Do you have any previous experience at running a historic sunglasses booth?"
"We'll make a lot more bucks if we go easy on the Real History."
"Whoopee! The *ArTrain* goes *Down*town this time!"
"There's no budget for this!"
"Fake it."
"Here's some stuff left over from the AArtfair we could show."
"We expect around 300,000 again this year. The same people as the past four years."
"It's a deal: You take the Kitten Toss and I'll run the Pony Torture."
"No naked Indians this year!"
"Lost your kid? He'll turn up by Labor Day."
"I'll bury this guy. *Too old fashioned.*"
"My nose itches!"
Yester Fester HQ
"Congratulations; you're General Chair for next year!"
"Of course. It's historical!"
"You're not wearing that old dress on the street, are you?"
"Hmm. Got to get some new volunteers..."

Central Planning Committee of Historical Rembrances and Official Observations

Today's Festival Committee sees fewer Depot Towners taking on management tasks, since the event draws so many people to the block that every hand is needed in their busy businesses. There's no more jazz tent by the Freighthouse either. Liability, lack of volunteers, and high costs have driven other events off the program as well.

The action on our own block has changed, too. Mall Shoppers are always amazed when they see a shop owner out front cranking up her awning for the morning sun. People actually take pictures of employees sweeping the sidewalks every morning and mistakenly conclude it's something like sweeping the streets in wooden shoes for the Holland Tulip Festival. In Ypsilanti these are things we do every day -- but one neighborhood newsletter publicly scolded a new bank in their block for not sweeping off their steps since they've opened. It may take a while, but time's the test; old ways are best. Or they could merge with another bank -- one that doesn't have a front doorstep, only a PIN number and an e-mail address. That's not for us folks at Heritage Headquarters, though, is it?

One of last year's differences was the appearance of an outside 'travel agent' who solicited 'free raffle tickets' for a Grand Prize Drawing to somewhere beyond The Energy Crisis. A week after Festival they were calling the respondents and hustling their credit card numbers from them. Local officials put a quick stop to the activity and prosecution is imminent.

Other scammers appear for the benefit of the crowds, too. Bogus art flourishes, a mysterious and unregistered float may appear in the parade, and somebody always has their brother-in-law move his home-made jellies into the shop and try to blend in with the merchandise that's been sitting there since last year. And there may even be a pickpocket or two in the crowd. We're talking Big Time Crowds here.

Still, Ypsilanti's August Heritage Festival is an event where families feel at home, where you can gawk all three days and pick up good food and drink along the way, where you don't have to buy parking or admission tickets and there are no hidden costs for frugal familes to watch out for. It's a happy and secure place and the biggest event for many people is seeing all the other people. Hailing friends from across the street and running to hang on to them while you reminisce is a social amenity that many seem to have forgotten, but at Heritage Fest they realize that's always been our style down here -- and many of them return the rest of the year to keep practicing their skills.

The Heritage Festival will draw huge crowds to Depot Town, Frog Island, and Riverside Park whether it's to see the Living History Expo or to buy a toy whirligig bi-plane cut from an empty can of Budweiser Beer.

And all that's a part of our heritage, too. That's what the Yesterfest is all about

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A Depot Town SAMPLER

Depot Town events at Heritage Fest August 18, 19, 20

Arts 'n' Crafts in street booths:

Twenty-eight artists showing their recent works of stained glass, oil painting, watercolor, matting and framing, jewelry, dried florals, wooden goods, mailboxes, crochet work, pottery, wood miniatures, cedar houses, southwest seasonals, magnets, hair accessories, shorts and shirts, personalized photos, wood signs, and more.

On the Depot Town stage near the tracks:

Friday

3-6 PM	To be determined
6:30 PM	Al Hill and the Love Butlers
8:30 PM	Al Townsend and the Couriers

Saturday

12:30 PM	Rich Coleman and the Washtenaw Knights
2:30 PM	Mulligan Stew
4:30 PM	Five Guys Named Moe
6:30 PM	The Skyles Band
8:30 PM	Lady Sunshine and the X Band

Sunday

Noon - 4 PM	To be determined

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